

LANDLINE

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife land management newsletter

Winter 2005

Take a look at our vision

By Dr. Jeff Koenings, WDFW Director

Faced with pressing needs to protect species at risk, while maintaining recreational access, how should the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) determine its future land management priorities?

That question is addressed in a new document, **"Lands 20/20: A Vision for the Future,"** which provides a framework for future WDFW land management.

Now we would like your comments, and those of all stakeholders with an interest in the future direction of our land management.

"Lands 20/20: A Vision for the Future" is ready for your review on our website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/lands2020/>. You can request a paper copy of this 21-page document by calling the WDFW Wildlife Program, at (360) 902-2515.

Written comments on this document should be submitted by March 11 to Margen Carlson at 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091 or by email to carlsmc@dfw.wa.gov.

This framework document was developed with input from our Land Management Advisory Council, as well as representatives from the Washington Association of Counties, Farm Bureau,

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Private lands help prairie grouse

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has allowed private landowners with enrolled acreage to do more to help Washington's threatened prairie grouse than any other federal, state, or local program.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) research has shown that CRP acreage provides nesting and foraging habitat and crucial migration corridors between blocks of native shrub-steppe habitat for the greater sage grouse. And most of Washington's active Columbian sharp-tailed grouse leks (breeding display grounds) are currently located in CRP fields.

That's why WDFW biologists are hoping that more CRP acreage enrollments of private property can be made in the areas where remnant populations of these species need the help.

WDFW's Private Lands/Farm Bill Coordinator Don Larsen of Spokane explains that the purpose of the federal CRP, as stated by the authorizing 1985 Farm Bill, is "the conservation of water, soil, and wildlife and that there must be an equitable balance of these goals." Landowners enrolled in CRP receive annual rental payments to leave highly erodible acreage out of crop production and cost-share assistance to establish grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees instead.

CRP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA). Each state has an FSA Committee of farmers, nominated by congressional representatives and appointed by the USDA and responsible for the general direction and supervision of FSA programs, including application of national program policies and procedures to meet local needs.

One of the FSA State Committee responsibilities is to select a "Conservation Priority Area" (CPA) — a geographic region of the state targeted for competitive CRP enrollment based on conservation of water quality, air quality, or wildlife. Applications for CRP enrollment of land within a CPA receive more ranking points and higher prioritization than land outside of a CPA.

Historically, Larsen notes, Washington's FSA State Committee has established CPA boundaries based on air quality in areas highly vulnerable to wind erosion, which did not include some important parts of the state's prairie grouse range.

"For several years we've requested that the FSA State Committee give increased consideration to wildlife conservation when establishing CPAs so that these additional grouse areas may be included," Larsen said. "We're currently working with a prairie grouse stakeholders group to collectively approach FSA with the wildlife CPA request."

Portions of Douglas County are the group's priority, Larsen explained, because it's home to about 650 of the state's estimated 1,000 remaining sage grouse. (Department of Defense lands in Yakima and Kittitas counties host the rest of the birds in an isolated sub-population.)

At those low numbers, the sage grouse has been listed as a state threatened species since 1998. Throughout its range, it has been considered a federal candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act since 2001. Last year sage



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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

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Take a look at our vision *(continued from page 1)*

Nature Conservancy, Conservation Commission, Washington Wildlife Federation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others.

It came about, in part, in response to legislative requests for a review of our land acquisition and management direction.

Since 1939, WDFW has acquired habitats that benefit fish and wildlife and also provide access for related recreation. Today, the Department owns a network of lands that protect many of Washington's most critical habitats and species while providing access for

hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.

The new framework document is intended to provide a blueprint to ensure WDFW's future land acquisitions are strategic, cost effective and supported by the public.

With an array of pressing needs, we must ensure that our land acquisition and management activities offer the greatest possible benefit to fish and wildlife while maximizing recreational access for citizens. And with on-going budget constraints, we also must address funding and management issues upfront before acquisitions occur.

We want to be both good stewards of our lands and good neighbors.

By developing and adhering to this guidance, we will be certain that lands we do acquire offer the highest value for fish, wildlife and related recreation, and that we have the ability and public support to maintain them.

If we are to be successful in sustaining Washington's rich natural heritage of fish and wildlife, we need the input of interested stakeholders in shaping this guiding document. I urge you to take a look at our vision for the future, and let us know what you think.

Put faces to names of WDFW Lands Division staff



Many of the WDFW Wildlife Program - Lands Division staff recently gathered for a meeting and since they're such a handsome lot, we took a group photo. We thought Land Line readers, who may only talk to some of these folks by phone, might want to put faces to the names.

From left to right, back row: Kevin Robinette, Eastern Region Wildlife Program Manager (WPM); Pete Lopushinsky, Colockum Wildlife Area (WA) Mgr.; Steve Degrood, Upland Wildlife Restoration (UWR) Biologist – Yakima; Matt Monda, North Central Region WPM; Martin Ellenburg, Klickitat WA Mgr.; Dan Peterson, Wells/Sagebrush Flat/Chelan WA Asst. Mgr.; Dale Swedberg, Sinlahekin/Driscoll Island/Chiliwist WA Mgr.; Edd Bracken, Range Specialist; Tom Reed, Lake Terrell/Tennant Lake WA Mgr.; Jim Mountjoy, Methow WA Mgr.; John Cotton, UWR Biologist – Moses

Lake; Terry Legg, Westside Lands Supervisor; Greg Fitzgerald, Columbia Basin WA Mgr.; Kyle Guzlas, UWR Biologist – Coastal Region; Don Larsen, Private Lands/Farm Bill Coordinator; Dan Budd, Real Estate Services Mgr.; Robby Sak, Sunnyside/Snake River WA Asst. Mgr.; Wayne Hunt, Wildlife Biologist; Jody Taylor, L.T. Murray/Wenas WA Asst. Mgr.; Mike Finch, Swanson Lakes WA Asst. Mgr.

L to R, middle row: Mark Quinn, Lands Division Mgr.; Don Hand, UWR Biologist – Kennewick; Joe McCanna, UWR Biologist – St. John; Bruce Berry, Oak Creek WA Asst. Mgr.; Jason Earl, Temporary UWR Biologist -Clarkston; Rocky Ross, Sunnyside/Snake River WA Mgr.; John McGowan, Oak Creek WA Mgr.; Steve Sherlock, Recreational Access Areas Mgr.; Paul Dahmer, Wildlife Area Section Mgr.; Jack Smith, Coastal Region WPM; Mike Keller, UWR Biologist –

Pasco; Richard Kessler, McNeil Island/South Puget Sound/Scatter Creek WA Mgr.; Doug Kuehn, Forester; Brian DuPont, Scotch Creek WA Asst. Mgr.; Scott Rasley, UWR Biologist – Walla Walla.

L to R, front row: Don Garrett, Sinlahekin Asst. Mgr.; Dave Heimer, Weed Mgmt. Coordinator; Todd Baarstad, UWR Biologist – Davenport; Brian Cole, Columbia Basin WA Asst. Mgr.; Brian Trickle, Eastside Lands Supervisor; Bob Dice, Asotin Creek/Chief Joseph WA Mgr.; Fred Dobler, Southwest Region WPM; Gretchen Fitzgerald, UWR Biologist – Ephrata; Ron Fox, UWR Biologist – East Wenatchee; Jim Gerchack, Olympic/Chehalis/Johns River WA Mgr.; Shana Kozusko, Asotin Creek/Chief Joseph WA Asst. Mgr.; Cindy Confer, L.T. Murray/Wenas WA Mgr.; Juli Anderson, Swanson Lakes WA Mgr.; Brian Calkins, St. Helens/Shillapoo/Vancouver Lake WA Mgr.

Help plan for a Wildlife Area near you

By Mark Quinn, WDFW Lands Division Manager

Nobody ever said planning was fun. But it's absolutely essential for us to maximize the use of limited financial resources and make the best decisions for long-term benefits to fish and wildlife and the public on WDFW lands.

One of the biggest challenges for me has been how to make a planning process relevant and do-able, given our limited resources and the constantly changing landscape of public expectations and political constraints, not to mention the ever-shrinking habitat base statewide for fish and wildlife.

We'll never make everyone happy, but we can allow everyone an opportunity to provide input and help us figure out the best way to meet the needs of fish and wildlife and public use on our lands. With help from all interested, we can manage these lands so they are recognized as valuable community and statewide assets that belong to all of us.

As a reflection of our new vision for WDFW lands (see Director Koenings' column on page one of this newsletter), this January we kicked off a new planning effort for WDFW Wildlife Areas. I think you'll want to be involved in this planning to see our decision-making process clearly.

Our planning focus is on benefits to fish and wildlife, benefits to the public, and operational excellence. With these goals in mind, we are convening local Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs), our statewide Lands Management Advisory Council (LMAC), many WDFW staff, and others to help determine specific objectives.

The process will allow us to discuss sometimes conflicting values, whether we're talking about habitat management for one species versus another, or use of WDFW lands by different user groups. There will be discussions about habitat management and restoration, recreational use, commercial use, rules and regulations, funding and anything else you want to bring to the table.

We want activities and priorities on WDFW lands to be clearly articulated and widely supported by the public. The only way to do that is to invite the public to help us develop these plans.

The plans will also undergo State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review before they are finally adopted.

Our target is to have plans done by December of this year, but the best time to identify and incorporate issues and strategies is now, at the outset of the process. The plans will be updated annually.

If you are interested in serving on a CAG or providing input now to the planning process, please contact the appropriate Wildlife Area Manager from the following list.

EASTERN REGION

ASOTIN /CHIEF JOSEPH/GROUSE FLATS

Bob Dice, Mgr., 1049 Port Way,
Clarkston, WA 99403, (509) 758-3151

SHERMAN CREEK/Le CLERC CREEK

Joe McCanna, Mgr., P.O. Box 432,
St. John, WA 99171, (509) 648-3680

SWANSON LAKES

Juli Anderson, Mgr., 19602 Seven Springs
Road, Creston, WA 99117, (509) 636-2344

WILLIAM T. WOOTEN

Gary Stendal, Mgr., 2134 Tucannon Road
Pomeroy, WA 99347, (509) 843-1530

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

COLUMBIA BASIN/ESQUATZEL COULEE/

WB-10 WASTEWAY/BANKS LAKE/ BILLY

CLAP LAKE/CRAB CREEK/DESERT/

GOOSE LAKES/ POTHOLE/ SEEP LAKES/

WINCHESTER/ GLOYDSEEPS/PRIEST

RAPIDS/ QUINCY/SUN LAKES

Greg Fitzgerald, Mgr., 6653 Road K NE,
Moses Lake, WA 98837, (509) 765-6641

METHOW

James Mountjoy, Mgr., 520 Bear Creek Road,
Winthrop, WA 98862, (509) 996-2559

SCOTCH CREEK/TUNK/ CHESAW

Jim Olson, Mgr.,
1514 Conculully Highway

Okanogan, WA 98840

(509) 826-4430

SINLAHEKIN/DRISCOLL ISLAND/CHLIWIST

Dale Swedberg, Mgr., P.O. Box C, Loomis, WA
98827, (509) 223-3358

WELLS/CHELAN BUTTE/ENTIAT/ SWAKANE

Marc Hallet, Mgr., Route 1 Box 197-B,
Brewster, WA 98812, (509) 686-4305

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

COLOCKUM

Pete Lopushinsky, Mgr., Box 9000 Tarpiscan
Road, Malaga, WA 98828, (509) 663-6260

OAK CREEK/COWICHE

John McGowan, Mgr., 16601 Highway 12,
Naches, WA 98937, (509) 653-2390

L.T. MURRAY/WENAS/WHISKEY DICK/

QUILOMENE

Cindi Confer, Mgr., 201 North Pearl St.,
Ellensburg, WA 98926, W: (509)-925-6746

SUNNYSIDE/BYRON/RATTLESNAKE

SLOPE/I-82/THORTON

Rocky Ross, Mgr., 2030 Holaday Road,
Mabton, WA 98935, (509) 545-2420

NORTH PUGET SOUND REGION

LAKE TERRELL/TENNANT LAKE

Tom Reed, Mgr., 5975 Lake Terrell Road,

Neighbors to watch wildlife areas?

By the nature of their remoteness, some WDFW Wildlife Areas can become targets for vandalism, dumping, litter, and potentially even greater abuses like wildfires.

WDFW Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager John McGowan thinks creation of a "Neighborhood Watch" program, like in urban areas, might be the answer to such problems.

Property owners adjacent to the wildlife area, or with inholdings within its boundaries, would simply keep an eye on things and let McGowan know about incidents or suspicious activity. McGowan would in turn do the same for WDFW's neighbors, who may have some of the same problems. Such alerts could help everyone prosecute violation cases and ultimately minimize problems.

With the help of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area Citizen Advisory Group (CAG), McGowan hopes to launch a neighborhood watch program this year and promises to report in a future newsletter edition about how it's working. Meanwhile, he said, other CAGs may find the idea worth trying to help protect their favorite wildlife area.

Ferndale, WA 98248, (360) 384-4723

SKAGIT/SKAGIT RIVER/BALD EAGLE

NATURAL AREA/CHERRY VALLEY/

SPENCER ISLAND/ STILLWATER/

CRESCENT LAKE/EBEY ISLAND

John Garrett, Mgr., 21961 Wylie Road,
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273, (360) 445-4441

SOUTHWEST REGION

COWLITZ

Mark Grabski, Mgr., P.O. Box 758,
Morton, WA 98356, (360) 496-6223

KLICKITAT

Martin Ellenburg, Mgr., Glenwood Highway,
Goldendale, WA 98620, (509) 773-4459

SHILLAPOO/ ST. HELENS/ VANCOUVER LAKE

Brian Calkins, Mgr., 2108 Grand Boulevard,
Vancouver, WA 98661, (360) 906-6725

COASTAL REGION

OLYMPIC/JOHNS RIVER/CHEHALIS/

Jim Gerchak, Mgr., 4686 Wishkah Road,
Aberdeen, WA 98520, (360) 533-5676

SCATTER CREEK/ SOUTH PUGET SOUND/

McNEIL ISLAND

Richard Kessler, Mgr., 7801 Phillips Road SW,
Tacoma, WA 98498, (253) 589-7235

Washington's Wildlife Areas: The Sinlahekin

The Sinlahekin Wildlife Area is the oldest of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) 64 wildlife areas across the state.

In the 1930's the Sinlahekin Valley in north central Okanogan County was recognized for its value as **mule deer** winter range. The first parcels were purchased from Okanogan County at a tax sale in 1939. Washington's six-year-old Game Department used some of the first available funds from the year-old Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, (known as the Pittman-Robertson Act after its sponsors), generated from federal excise taxes on sporting firearms and ammunition.

Now spanning about 14,000 acres, the Sinlahekin includes management of 2,834 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and 480 acres leased from the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The Sinlahekin lies about 2-1/2 miles south of the town of Loomis and 15 miles west of Tonasket. About 66 percent of adjacent land in the Sinlahekin Valley is DNR property or Okanogan National Forest.

Two non-contiguous wildlife areas purchased in the 1970's are also now managed as units of the Sinlahekin – Driscoll Island Wildlife Area is 260 acres of waterfowl habitat between the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers south of Oroville, and the Chiliwist

Wildlife Area is 4,889 acres of mule deer winter range in the foothills west of the Okanogan River south of Malott.

The Sinlahekin Valley is a narrow, glaciated valley that runs north-south for 17 miles. The wildlife area has steep slopes rising to over 4,000 feet from the valley floor at 1,100 feet. It encompasses two watersheds: Sinlahekin Creek and its tributaries thread through the northern half, and Coulee Creek and its waterways wind through the south end.

Sinlahekin Creek provides about six miles of fishing, plus numerous beaver ponds. The area's natural and manmade lakes, ponds and potholes — including Sasse, Zachman, Schalow, Doheny, Fish, Blue, Forde, Reflection and Conners — provide more than 230 acres of habitat for **waterfowl** and **fish**. Most are fishable, many are stocked and/or have natural reproduction of cutthroat, rainbow, brown, tiger and brook trout, and some have boat launches and day-use or overnight camping areas. Blue Lake, which was a broodstock source for westslope cutthroat in the '50's and '60's, is now a selective gear fishery to maintain its popular rainbow and brown trout fishery.

The Sinlahekin has a rich diversity of plant communities with over 510 vascular plants identified, 1/6th of the statewide total. The dominant habitat types are **shrub-steppe**, characterized by bluebunch wheatgrass, big sage, bitterbrush and serviceberry; **wetlands**, with hawthorn, water birch, mountain alder, grasses, sedges; and **dry site forests** with Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and rocky cliffs.

Although mule deer are the original focus species, the Sinlahekin today is managed for a variety of wildlife. Over 215 species of birds, 60 species of mammals, over 25 species of fish, about 20 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 110 species of butterflies use the area during some part of their life cycle.

Blue and **ruffed grouse** are the native upland game birds, but bird hunting on the Sinlahekin really became



popular in the '50's, '60's and '70's when **Chinese ring-necked pheasants** were released. The wildlife area still supports some pheasants, lots of **California quail**, a few **Hungarian partridges**, and an abundance of its original forest grouse. Occasionally found in the shrub-steppe habitat are **sharp-tailed grouse**, now a threatened species.

Bighorn sheep historically occupied the area but were extirpated in the early 1900's. They were reintroduced in 1957 with the release of 18 California bighorns from British Columbia, flourishing to become the source of transplants to other parts of the state. From the '40's through the '70's, a small population of **mountain goats** occupied the rugged terrain near Blue Lake and along the south side of Sinlahekin Creek Canyon, but none have been seen since 1982. Occasionally a **moose** wanders through.

In recent decades, **white-tailed deer** have increased substantially in the bottoms where Sinlahekin Creek flows through dense stands of alder, birch, and aspen. Whitetails today outnumber mule deer, although hunting for both species is still excellent and one of the area's most popular uses.

"Hunters and fishers are still our most common visitors," said Sinlahekin manager Dale Swedberg, "but many locals, and more and more folks from other places, enjoy wildlife watching, hiking, horseback-riding, camping or just driving through. The scenery alone is pretty fantastic."

Swedberg is a 29-year veteran of the department, serving as a biologist, a wildlife control agent, and a fish and wildlife enforcement officer before taking on management of the Sinlahekin in 1997.



Photo by Tara Felder

(continued on page 6)

Private lands help prairie grouse *(continued from page 1)*

grouse were warranted for federal threatened status, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opted not to list it at this time.

About half of the sage grouse nests in Douglas County are on CRP lands. Out of Washington's current 1.35 million acres providing \$70 million in annual CRP payments, Douglas County has a little over 187,000 acres paying landowners \$8.5 million.

Portions of neighboring Okanogan, Lincoln, and Grant counties have also been identified as high priority for a wildlife CPA for CRP land enrollment to not only help sage grouse expand, but to benefit other listed shrub-steppe wildlife, including the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, the Columbia Basin Pygmy rabbit, and the Washington ground squirrel.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, also state threatened and a candidate for federal listing, was deemed unwarranted for ESA listing in 2000 in part because of CRP land availability and use by the birds. Remnant populations totaling about 700 birds are currently found in Lincoln, Douglas and Okanogan counties.

Larsen notes that other programs are trying to address grouse habitat needs. Last year a western states congressional delegation, including Washington's Doc Hastings and Jennifer Dunn, requested that \$5 million be

dedicated to sage grouse conservation through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). Another \$2 million was specifically targeted to help protect sage grouse habitat in Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Washington through the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). Sage grouse habitat was the only wildlife consideration used by USDA in Washington to determine if landowners were eligible for increased payments through the Conservation Securities Program (CSP).

"Those are important efforts," Larsen said, "but they pale in comparison to the funds allocated to and the amount of prairie grouse habitat provided by CRP. Combined funding last year for WHIP, GRP and CSP was about \$2.2 million, while CRP dollars totaled over \$70 million. Due to its sheer size, this is a program that can really make a difference for our grouse on a landscape scale."

Larsen says that making wildlife a priority for CRP acreage enrollments is neither new nor distant from Washington. Both Oregon and Idaho FSA State Committees have established CPAs based on wildlife, primarily native grouse.

Early last year the Western Governors Association passed a resolution urging the Secretary of Agriculture to devote any and all available resources to sage grouse



conservation through the Farm Bill program.

A General Accounting Office report identified that cooperative efforts were lacking between the Departments of Defense, Interior and Agriculture regarding threatened or endangered species, and last summer President Bush issued a directive that federal agencies "shall facilitate cooperative conservation."

"There's lots of recognition at the highest levels that we need to address these kinds of species' needs," Larsen said. "That's why the stakeholders group is working to request the wildlife CPA from the FSA state committee."

That group includes the Foster Creek Conservation District, private landowners in Douglas County, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Defense at the Yakima Training Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Yakama Nation, and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

WDFW roads close for RMAP compliance

About 22 miles of roads on WDFW-owned forestlands have been closed over the last few years as the agency works to comply with some relatively new rules in the state's Forest Practices Act.

Approved by the Legislature in 2001, WAC 222-24-051 requires all landowners with 500 or more acres of forested land to develop a Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) by July 2006. Based on recommendations in the Forest and Fish Report of 1999, the Legislature directed the Forest Practices Board to develop the new rules to protect aquatic resources and ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

RMAPs must identify and assess the condition of all forest roads and problems that threaten, or could threaten, public resources. The plans

also must provide a schedule of when the problems will be corrected.

Required corrective action is based on the "worst first" principle where roads that block fish passage receive the highest priority. Roads that deliver sediment to streams, roads with stability issues or the potential for them, roads or ditch-lines that intercept ground water, and roads or ditches that deliver surface water to streams are next in line.

WDFW Forest Road coordinator Lonnie Landrie reports that of the nearly 511,000 acres that WDFW owns across the state, about 150,000 acres are forested and have nearly 500 miles of road.

Landrie and other WDFW staff have identified Road Management Blocks on the following WDFW properties in this "worst first" priority order: Olympic/Johns River (Grays Harbor County), LT Murray (Kittitas County), Oak Creek



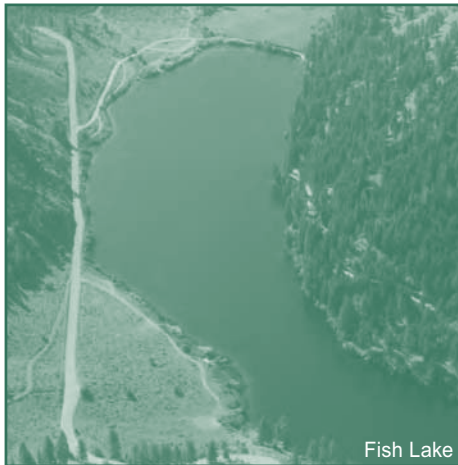
(Yakima County), Sherman Creek (Ferry County), W.T. Wooten (Columbia County), Methow (Okanogan County), Colockum (Chelan-Kittitas County), Chief Joseph/Asotin (Asotin County), Mt. Saint Helens (Cowlitz County), South Puget Sound/Scatter Creek (Pierce-Thurston counties), Klickitat (Klickitat County), Skagit (Skagit County), Wenas (Yakima County),

Washington's Wildlife Areas: The Sinlahekin *(continued from page 4)*

Weed control is one of Swedberg's biggest challenges, not just on the Sinlahekin but on Driscoll Island and Chiliwist, also.

"We inherited Dalmatian toadflax, Baby's breath, Russian knapweed and Diffuse knapweed," Swedberg said. "We stay on top of it with Integrated Pest Management, using all means of control, including chemical spraying along roadsides and areas of high use, mowing and cutting, planting native vegetation, and releasing bugs that just eat certain weeds, like *Larinus minutus*, the diffuse knapweed flower and seedhead-eating weevil."

Swedberg also uses "cultural management practices" — crop rotation, reseeding, fertilization, and other methods that favor the growth of



Fish Lake

desirable plants over noxious weeds. He tries to minimize soil disturbance, which often provides a starting place for invasives. The key to truly successful weed control is prevention, requiring cooperation from all surrounding landowners and the users of the wildlife area.

"We post signs and provide information with our maps reminding backcountry horsemen and campers, for example, that weed-contaminated hay or straw is not welcome," he said. "And we work with county weed control authorities and our neighbors."

Parts of the Sinlahekin and Chiliwist unit are **grazed** to benefit wildlife.

"Cattle target certain vegetation that can help reduce competition with other plants," Swedberg explained. "They remove grasses so the forbs and shrubs that deer like to browse are healthier. There's certainly a place for limited and well managed grazing here."

Driscoll Island was originally acquired to provide alternative foraging area for

Canada geese, which were damaging crops on adjacent private lands. Cattle grazing was initially used to maintain preferred goose foraging conditions. But unrestricted cattle access to the riverbanks created habitat problems for fish, including endangered upper Columbia steelhead, summer Chinook salmon and Osoyoos sockeye salmon. Grazing was discontinued in 2001.

Parts of the Sinlahekin are also **logged** to benefit wildlife. Two timber sales of predominately Douglas fir were recently conducted to open up areas for shrub, grass and forbs and to reduce fuels for potentially severe wildfires.

Both dryland triticale grain and irrigated alfalfa **farming** are managed by sharecroppers on small acreages of all units of the wildlife area. Those acres are heavily used by deer, waterfowl, upland game birds, songbirds, and other species.

A winter deer feeding operation, that has been conducted on the Chiliwist to keep deer away from orchards along the Okanogan River just east of the wildlife area, will be discontinued this fall. WDFW recently provided fencing to the affected neighboring landowners, and by policy now only winter-feeds wildlife in emergency or exceptional situations.

Of all the Sinlahekin's management issues, the use of **prescribed burning** to enhance wildlife habitat is easily Swedberg's favorite.

"Fire is integral to Ponderosa pine habitat," he said. "In wildlife management we say 'habitat is the key to wildlife,' but we tend to focus on species and forget about natural processes, like fire, that sustain habitat. By default, habitat has been 'protected' from fire, and that doesn't help wildlife in the long run."

Swedberg explained with a classic example: Lynx depend on snowshoe hares, which depend on young lodgepole pine, which depend on periodic fires to maintain young stands. When that chain is broken with fire suppression, only old lodgepole pines are left, the hare population declines, and ultimately the lynx population declines.

"The importance of having the ecological process of fire in the landscape cannot be overstated," Swedberg said. "Foresters understand it, but we wildlife folks sometimes seem out of the loop."

Swedberg is working to get in the loop by helping form the North Central

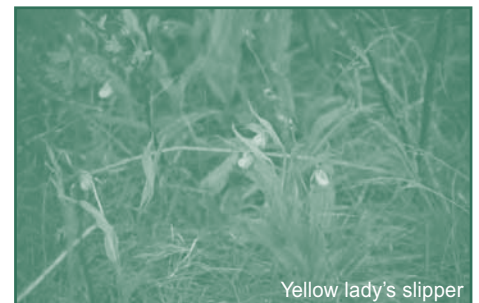


Washington Prescribed Fire Council — a network including the U.S. Forest Service, DNR, local fire districts, Nature Conservancy, Okanogan County Cattlemen's Association, Okanogan County Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service and interested landowners. It's patterned after councils in Florida that encourage prescribed burning and help manage them by training and certifying burn managers and changing liability laws.

Swedberg is planning the Sinlahekin's first prescribed burns this spring. Besides mule deer, species to benefit are pygmy nuthatches, white-headed woodpeckers and possibly flammulated owls, all dependent on late stage or "seral" Ponderosa pines, widely spaced, for territorial nesting and foraging. To maintain that older forest, the young "doghair" pines that spring up in dense stands need to be reduced with frequent, low intensity fires.

Eventually, as he learns more about fire as a management tool, Swedberg hopes to maximize renewal of mule deer range with prescribed burning, too.

"Our mule deer numbers today are nowhere near the highs of the '50's and my theory is that fire suppression probably played a role," he said. "The catalyst for fire suppression was the great wildfires that swept western Montana, north Idaho, and eastern Washington in 1910. That fire suppression effort initially benefited mule deer because it allowed the shrubs they like to flourish. By 1960, those



Yellow lady's slipper

WDFW roads close for RMAP compliance *(continued from page 5)*

Sinlahekin (Okanogan County), Scotch Creek (Okanogan County), Chelan/Wells (Chelan County), Lake Terrell (Whatcom County) and Snoqualmie (King County).

So far, WDFW has submitted RMAPs for 15 of those Wildlife Areas, totaling about 85 percent of all WDFW forested land. The remaining forested land has been assessed and plans are being developed for submittal in 2005.

The road problems Landrie and others have encountered include culverts which block fish passage, roads adjacent to streams that deliver sediment to those streams, roads that are unstable or not safe, and roads that need improved ditch lines for better drainage.

"Historically, many forest roads were constructed near streams because this was the flattest terrain and made for easy timber haul," Landrie said. "These stream- adjacent roads are sometimes the ones with the greatest number of problems and negative impact to fish and wildlife. In some such cases the best action to protect that resource, and the most responsible use of financial resources, is to close or abandon the road to all motorized vehicle access."

Landrie explained that requirements to abandon a road under the new rules include removal of all culverts, providing sufficient cross drains or water bars,

blocking motorized vehicle access, and leaving the road in a suitable condition to control erosion.

For example, recent corrective action on the L.T. Murray, Wenas and W.T. Wooten Wildlife Areas included the abandonment of 22 miles of problem road, removal of 19 fish passage barrier culverts to open about ten miles of stream to fish passage, and stream channel restoration with placement of large woody debris to prevent erosion. The abandoned roads were ripped to create a seedbed for native shrubs and grasses that will provide additional forage and habitat for elk, deer and other wildlife. Most of the road closures are on the L.T. Murray in the Robinson Canyon, Ainsley Canyon, and North Fork Manastash Creek areas where roads are adjacent to fish-bearing streams at risk from sediment loading.

This year (2005) additional road abandonment, fish passage barrier culvert removal, and road upgrade and improvement are scheduled for more of the L.T. Murray, and on Sherman Creek, Olympic, Mt. Saint Helens, Methow, Chief Joseph/Asotin, and Colockum Wildlife Areas.

When possible, roads that have been identified for abandonment on WDFW lands are posted with notifications to users up to a year in advance of the closure, Landrie said.

"But users of the roads in our wildlife areas, as well as the roads on other large forested property that comes under the requirements of these rules, will also see some road improvements and many roads with no changes at all," Landrie said. That's part of this assessment process, too."

Annual reports are required through 2015 for each RMAP submitted, describing the past year's work and what is scheduled for the upcoming year. Those public records are available through the Washington Department of Natural Resources or WDFW upon request.

WDFW's mission to be a good steward of the land includes the protection and enhancement of stream water quality for salmon, steelhead and resident fish populations, and riparian and wetland habitats, which are used by 90 percent of Washington's wildlife. Reduction of road densities is important to provide adequate escape and hiding cover and forage for all types of wildlife by reducing noxious weed infestations and allowing more native vegetation to thrive.

"Meeting the requirements of the new rules fits nicely with our overall management goals and objectives for our lands," Landrie said.

The Sinlahekin *(continued from page 6)*

shrubs were becoming decadent with less nutritional value for deer."

Swedberg is working on a fire history analysis to determine when and where fires burned and stands reconstructed. The information can be used both in future fire management and to develop visitor interpretive materials to convey the importance of fire in wildlife habitat.

Swedberg hopes to leave prescribed burning in the wildlife management toolbox before he retires from state service. He also plans on leaving a more comprehensive picture of the Sinlahekin's treasures.

"There's still so much we don't fully understand about the **diversity** and interconnectedness of plant and animal species here," he explained. "We need to know more to manage it best."

Swedberg solicits help from many sources. Central Washington University student interns have mapped various features of the wildlife area with Global Positioning System (GPS) and

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology. Students have also collected, identified and created a display of butterflies. A British Columbia lepidopterist and members of the Washington Butterfly Association have also visited the Sinlahekin to document butterflies. Botanists have identified ten species of rare plants, including the threatened yellow lady's slipper. Birding groups across the state help update the area's bird checklist.

Swedberg is looking for historic photos of the Sinlahekin Valley and the wildlife area and is always interested in talking to people about their memories and experiences on the Sinlahekin.

The Sinlahekin's Citizen Advisory Group (CAG), which was created in 2003 and meets twice a year, serves as a sounding board for overall management. Some members are from the same groups Swedberg works with on the fledgling fire council, but they also include hunters, fishers, birders, hikers, and environmentalists.

"The CAG has been valuable to just keep in communication with folks who care about this place as much as I do," Swedberg said.



This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the policy of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to adhere to the following: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the WDFW ADA Coordinator at 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 or write to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of External Programs, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 130, Arlington, VA 22203.

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Vehicle Use Permits are required for use of all posted WDFW lands. The permits generate funding for maintenance of WDFW lands and water access sites used by hunters, anglers, boaters, bird watchers and other recreationists. One permit is issued once annually to each fishing or hunting license holder and is transferable between up to two vehicles. Additional permits may be purchased for \$5 each. If purchased separately without a fishing or hunting license, the permit is \$10. Vehicle Use Permits must be clearly displayed and visible from outside the vehicle. They can be placed on the dash, hung from the rear view mirror or placed on the front seat. The penalty for parking on WDFW lands without a permit is the standard \$66 parking infraction, but it is automatically reduced to \$30 if the vehicle owner shows proof of purchase of a permit within 15 days of the violation.

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05 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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